



**CITY OF AKRON, OHIO**  
**POLICE DIVISION**  
**AUGUSTUS A. HALL, CHIEF OF POLICE**

<b>NUMBER</b> P-2010-028	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> July 6, 2010	<b>RESCINDS</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b> Social Networking and Information Sharing		<b>ISSUING AUTHORITY</b> Chief Augustus A. Hall

## **I. POLICY**

While employees of the Akron Police Department have a right to personal expression, employees' social networking and informational sharing cannot be detrimental to the efficient operations of the police department or bring the department into disrepute.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Social networking sites - Any Internet site used to post comments, information, photographs, videos, etc., to be viewed by others; e.g., Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, comment sections following online articles, etc.
- B. Unprotected speech - Employees can be ordered to cease and/or be disciplined for communication:
  - 1. If the communication was made pursuant to the employee's duties or the communication owes its existence to the employee's job responsibilities, or
  - 2. If the communication is reasonably calculated to disrupt the operation of the police department, create division or destroy working relationships in the police department, or undermine authority in the police department, or
  - 3. If the communication brings the mission of the police department and the professionalism of its officers into disrepute.

## **III. PROCEDURE**

- A. Employees using social networking sites, public forums or other mediums shall not post, publish, transmit, or disseminate any photographs, video or audio recordings, likenesses or images of department logos, emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment, or other material that specifically identifies the Akron Police Department for private, commercial interest.
- B. Photographs of any crime or accident scene shall not be taken or disseminated outside of the scope of an employee's official duties.

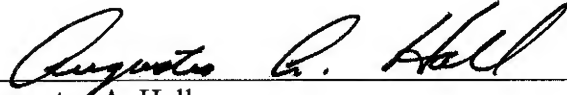
- C. Employees are prohibited from posting, publishing, transmitting, or disseminating any pictures or videos of official department training, activities, or work related assignments outside the scope of an employee's official duties.
- D. Published or posted information that appears to bring discredit or disrepute to this department or to a department employee, or that promotes misconduct, shall be reviewed for possible investigation.
- E. Employees shall not disseminate departmental information that is confidential.
- F. Employees shall maintain confidentiality of information from personnel files and databases and shall not share information of this nature unless in conjunction with official duties, required by an official order or mandate, or with permission of the involved employee.

#### **IV. CONSIDERATIONS**

- A. Employees should consider how social networks, public forums, or other mediums, could have adverse consequences on future employment, cross-examination in criminal cases, impact on civil suits, and public and private embarrassment.
- B. Employees should exercise good judgment and demonstrate personal accountability when choosing to participate on social networking sites or in other public forums.
  - 1. Avoid gun "glorification" - Posing with weaponry, aiming the gun at the camera.
  - 2. Picture choice - Avoid posting photographs showing alcohol/alcohol consumption or nudity.
  - 3. Watch your comments - Posted comments on social networking sites have been used in legal proceedings by defense attorneys and civil plaintiff attorneys to show an officer has a predisposition to be physical or has a documented bias.
  - 4. Restrict personal information - Social networking sites are tools to find people and research information for the criminal element as well as law enforcement.
  - 5. Highlight accomplishments instead of airing complaints.
  - 6. Privacy settings - Know how they work and use them.
  - 7. When in doubt, leave it out - Don't let one mouse click destroy years of building your reputation.
- C. Employees who wish to post or publish photographs, comments, etc., of other department employees should inform and seek approval from those employees before posting.

- D. Professionalism, ethics, and integrity are critical components of law enforcement. To achieve and maintain a high level of respect from the community and continue to further our mission, officers must realize there is an expectation of law enforcement officers to adhere to a higher standard in their personal and professional lives.

By Order Of,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Augustus A. Hall", written over a horizontal line.

Augustus A. Hall  
Chief of Police

Date 6-30-09